

1ST ANNIVERSARY OF H.R. 1 – FOR THE PEOPLE
March 10, 2020

Madam President. It's been one year since the House of Representatives passed the most comprehensive package of anti-corruption reforms since Watergate. One year.

H.R. 1 shines a light on secret campaign contributions, makes it easier to vote, and cleans up corruption in D.C. It is the solution to the gridlock that the American people are tired of in Washington.

But for one year, H.R. 1 has gathered dust on Majority Leader McConnell's desk. Every single senator in the Democratic caucus – is co-sponsoring the *For the People Act*, Senator Merkley's and my companion bill to H.R. 1.

But it is buried deep in the Leader's legislative graveyard.

Over the course of the last year – as the *For the People Act* has languished – tens of millions of dollars were spent – much of it in secret – to influence the policy-making process.

Almost half a dozen states passed new laws restricting voting rights.

The U.S. Supreme Court gave the greenlight to political gerrymandering.

And President Trump, visiting his own properties dozens of times, funneled millions of taxpayer dollars into his own pockets.

Yet – the Republican Senate is silent.

Silent as our democracy faces a crisis like none we have seen in our lifetimes.

We can draw a **straight line** from the crisis in our democracy . . . to the more than 300 bipartisan bills buried in the Majority Leader's graveyard.

The bills waiting for Senate action are broadly supported by the American people.

But they are opposed by the ultra-wealthy, the special interests, the powerful corporations. . . that try to buy our elections. Like Senator McConnell, these big money interests are proud of killing these bills.

Here's what's happened over that year the *For the People Act* has been in that graveyard.

The number of Americans without health insurance increased by hundreds of thousands.

California wildfires – worsened by climate change – cost \$25 billion. Flooding in the Midwest – also a casualty of climate change – cost \$12.5 billion.

And 22 people were gunned down at an El Paso Walmart by a white nationalist armed with an assault rifle. Sadly, that was just a fraction of the thousands of gun-related deaths in our country last year.

This is not the America that the American people want. That they believe in.

The gap between what the American people are clamoring for – and what the Republican majority in the Senate is giving them – is as wide as the Grand Canyon and is growing wider by the day.

Just look at the polls.

Staggering numbers – closing in on 90 percent – of Americans support universal, affordable healthcare.

With these numbers – you’d think Republicans would be making sure that every American has health care.

But instead, Republicans have tried to dismantle the Affordable Care Act every chance they get. As we speak, President Trump and 18 Republican governors and attorneys general are urging the Supreme Court to strike down the Affordable Care Act.

The American people want exorbitant prescription drug prices reeled in. 80 percent of Americans think the costs of prescription drugs are far too high . . . and we all know that big pharma is the reason why.

Yet – legislation to reduce drug costs is also stuck – stuck among the hundreds of other bills on the Majority Leader’s desk.

Over the last 2-plus decades, big pharma has spent \$3.7 billion – yes, that’s billion – on lobbying. And so today the same vial of insulin that cost \$175 dollars 15 years ago costs more than \$1,400 dollars today. As result – some diabetics ration their insulin. And some, as a result, have died.

It’s not just our health care—the ability of our planet to support human life as we know it is at stake. Time and again – polling tells us that the American people want us to tackle climate change. The American people accept the science. They understand the existential threat.

Yet – dozens of climate change bills lie dead in the Senate — including my Renewable Electricity Standard bill to move us to 100 clean energy by mid-century.

Nearly 70 percent of Americans– including a majority of Republicans – believe we need to take “aggressive action” to fight climate change. And almost 80 percent believe the government should invest more in renewable energy resources.

With these kinds of numbers, you’d think Congress would be passing climate change legislation on a regular basis.

Except – you’d be wrong. Why?

Well, an expert analysis found that from 2000 to 2016, \$2 billion was spent on lobbying regarding climate policy. And the fossil fuel interests outspent environmental public interest groups by a factor of 10 to 1.

This is NOT democracy at work. This is a complete perversion of our democratic ideals.

But – the good news is – we can change all of this. We can reinvigorate our democracy. We can end the reign of big money, empower small donors, make it easier to vote, stop political gerrymandering, and bring ethical conduct to Washington.

The Majority Leader just needs to stop doing the bidding of the wealthy special interests and bring the *For the People Act* to the Senate floor.

Madam President, I yield the floor.